

# **BERKSHIRE COUNTY CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS PROJECT**

## Participating Entities:

Adams-Cheshire Regional School District (Towns of Adams, Cheshire)

Berkshire Hills Regional School District (Towns of Gt. Barrington, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge)

Central Berkshire Regional School District (Towns of Becket, Cummington, Dalton, Hinsdale, Peru, Washington, Windsor)

Farmington River regional School District (Town of Otis)

Lee Public Schools

Lenox Public Schools

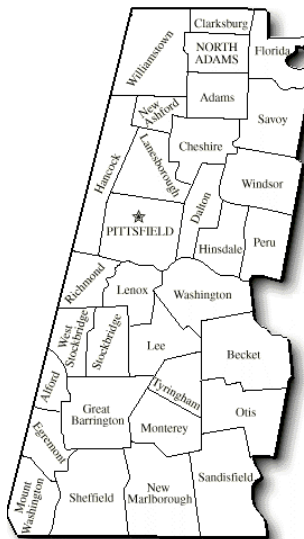
Northern Berkshire School Union (Towns of Clarksburg, Florida, Savoy)

Northern Berkshire Regional Vocational Technical High School (Towns of Adams, Clarksburg, Florida, Monroe, No. Adams, Savoy, Williamstown)

Southern Berkshire Regional School District (Towns of Alford, Egremont, New Marlborough, Sheffield, Monterey)

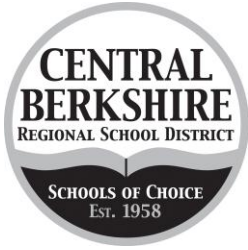
## Submitted:

March 31, 2014



## **Table of Contents**

INTRODUCTORY LETTER .....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	4
SECTION 1: PARTNER COMMUNITIES .....	6
SECTION 2: GOALS.....	7
SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.....	7
SECTION 4: BUDGET.....	9
SECTION 5: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS.....	11
SECTION 6: OUTCOMES .....	14
CONTACT INFORMATION .....	16



## **CENTRAL BERKSHIRE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

254 Hinsdale Road • P.O. Box 299 • Dalton, Massachusetts 01227-0299  
Administrative Offices (413) 684-0320 or 684-0325  
Business Office (413) 684-1792  
FAX (413) 684-4088

WILLIAM J. CAMERON,  
Ph.D., J.D.  
Superintendent  
wcameron@cbrsd.org

ROBERT PUTNAM, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent  
rputnam@cbrsd.org

MELISSA J. FALKOWSKI  
Business Administrator  
mfalkowski@cbrsd.org

### **INTRODUCTORY LETTER**

March 31, 2014

Timely development and implementation of a K-12 curriculum that is aligned with the 2011 Massachusetts Standards, also known as the Common Core, is a not only a daunting challenge but a near impossibility for individual small school districts. Small districts lack the fiscal and human resources to accomplish what needs to be done on the implementation schedule dictated by the Commonwealth's all but certain adoption of Common Core-based PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) test, the results from which will be used to establish publicly whether a given school or district is performing adequately. Yet the Commonwealth, through its Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, has placed squarely on the shoulders of local districts, whatever fiscal and personnel limitations they face, the burden of producing an aligned curriculum and providing instruction that will satisfy the demands of PARCC.

It was in this context that eight small suburban and rural school districts in Berkshire County, with central Berkshire Regional School District as the lead agency, sought and received a 2013 Community Innovation Challenge grant. The purpose of the CIC grant was to enable these districts to proceed on a shared basis to develop curriculum maps and K-12 instructional units primarily in subject areas affected by the 2011 Massachusetts Standards and what follows from their adoption.

As set out in the grant proposal the project employed a recently retired superintendent of schools as its coordinator, and set out, in close cooperation with the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, to offer a summer 2013 work session for teachers and administrators from all participating districts. This occurred in two parts: three initial days of work immediately at the end of the 2012-2013 school year at MCLA and Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield; and follow-up work completed independently by groups working as teams, focusing on specific subjects at specific grade levels. A curriculum map template available commercially (Build Your Own Curriculum©) that all districts could use was the basis for much of the work.

The work product from these six days of effort by close to 100 teachers and administrators was posted on a website hosted by Central Berkshire Regional School District, the intent being that all districts, participants and non-participants alike, could make use of what had been done and could proceed with further development. The project concluded with two days in January 2013. At that time a facilitated review of what had been accomplished since the end of the summer was undertaken, and further efforts were made to foster use of the work product and its further development by project participants.

There were many benefits derived from this six-month long project. Some of those benefits were the work product that came from the 600 or so person-hours invested in this effort by educators from across Berkshire County. Others lay in the discovery of what could and could not be accomplished in this way by similarly situated school districts facing comparable challenges. In brief: this approach has considerable benefits; but it is not a panacea, and obstacles we encountered would need to be overcome for the effort we made to be usefully replicated elsewhere.

Sincerely,



William Cameron  
Superintendent of Schools

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In November 2011 the Massachusetts Board of Elementary & Secondary Education adopted new curriculum frameworks for K-12 education in the Commonwealth. These new frameworks replaced the Curriculum Frameworks adopted by the then-Board of Education in response to the mandate of the 1993 Education Reform Act (ERA). The new Curriculum Frameworks were derived from the national Common Core Curriculum Standards, which, unlike the ERA-mandated standards, were not developed in the Commonwealth or under the jurisdiction of the Board of ESE, but rather as a national initiative.

Timely development and implementation of a K-12 curriculum that is aligned with the 2011 Massachusetts Frameworks is a daunting challenge to all school districts in Massachusetts, whose progress toward not only development of new curricula but also student progress toward achieving mastery of all the elements of those curricula will be assessed, starting in the 2014-2015 school year, through a new assessment instrument, also being nationally, known as the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), which will eventually replace the current Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests in use since 2001. . And what is daunting for all school districts is a near impossibility for individual small school districts, such as one finds, with one exception – the Pittsfield Public Schools – throughout Berkshire County.

Small districts lack the fiscal and human resources to accomplish what needs to be done on the implementation schedule dictated by the Commonwealth's all but certain PARCC test adoption. The results of PARCC, as is the case now with MCAS results, will be used to establish publicly whether a given school or district is performing adequately. Yet, despite the shortage of revenue and manpower common to small school districts, the Commonwealth, through its Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, has decided, whatever fiscal and personnel limitations such districts face, that they, not the Commonwealth itself, should bear the burden of producing an aligned curriculum in every case, and providing instruction that will satisfy the demands of PARCC.

It was in this context that eight small suburban and rural school districts in Berkshire County, with central Berkshire Regional School District as the lead agency, sought and received a 2013 Community Innovation Challenge grant. The purpose of the CIC grant was to enable these districts to proceed on a shared basis to develop curriculum maps and K-12 instructional units primarily in subject areas affected by the 2011 Massachusetts Standards and what follows from their adoption.

As set out in the grant proposal the project employed a recently retired superintendent of schools as its coordinator, and set out, in close cooperation with the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, to offer a summer 2013 work session for teachers and administrators from all participating districts. This occurred in two parts: three initial days of work immediately at the end of the 2012-2013 school year at MCLA and Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield; and follow-up work completed independently by groups working as teams, focusing on specific subjects at specific grade levels. A curriculum map template available commercially (Build Your Own Curriculum©) that all districts could use was the basis for much of the work.

The work product from these six days of effort by close to 100 teachers and administrators was posted on a website hosted by Central Berkshire Regional School District, the intent being that all districts, participants and non-participants alike, could make use of what had been done and could proceed with further development. The project concluded with two days in January 2013. At that time training was provided by the Common Core Institute in the use of so-called “de-constructed” Common Core standards, a move intended to facilitate further development of what had been accomplished since the end of the summer. In addition, further efforts were made through the Berkshire County Superintendents Roundtable, a regional subsidiary of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, to foster educators’ use of the work product, and to create interest in further development by a larger educator population of what had been done in July and August by project participants.

There were decided benefits derived from this six-month long project. These benefits included:

1. The completed work product that came from the 600 or so person-hours invested in this effort by educators from across Berkshire County, which can be found at [Central Berkshire Regional School District’s website](#), “Administration,” then “CIC Grant Home Page”;
2. The discovery and utilization by participating districts of new Common Core-attuned curriculum development resources, including Build Your Own Curriculum© software and analytic tools available through the Common Core Institute;
3. Greater familiarity of instructional personnel in Berkshire County districts with their colleagues doing similar work in other such districts; and
4. More effective engagement of Berkshire County districts across the whole county with the human resources available to them through the faculty and administration of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and the Berkshire Readiness Center.

Other lessons learned from this endeavor have been the discovery of what could not be accomplished in this way by similarly situated school districts facing comparable challenges, at least without changes being made in. These changes should include;

1. A longer planning period than approximately three months between the award of the grant and the commencement of the activities needed to recruit participants;

2. A great sense of community of purpose, particularly in areas of specific need, among the participating districts;
3. More effective outreach after the project had concluded to ensure greater participation among the educators who did not attend and take part in the workshops, so that greater awareness of and commitment to using the resources that were produced could be a likely outcome; and
4. Assurance that funding from some source would be available in subsequent years to build on what was made possible through the 2013 CIC grant

## **SECTION 1: PARTNER COMMUNITIES**

### **Original applicant districts:**

Adams-Cheshire Regional School District (comprising the Towns of Adams, Cheshire)

Berkshire Hills Regional School District (comprising the Towns of Gt. Barrington, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge)

Central Berkshire Regional School District (comprising the Towns of Becket, Cummington, Dalton, Hinsdale, Peru, Washington, Windsor)

Lee Public Schools

Lenox Public Schools

Northern Berkshire School Union (Comprising the Towns of Clarksburg, Florida, Savoy)

Northern Berkshire Regional Vocational Technical High School (Comprising the Towns of Adams, Clarksburg, Florida, Monroe, No. Adams, Savoy, Williamstown)

Southern Berkshire Regional School District (Comprising the Towns of Alford, Egremont, New Marlborough, Sheffield, Monterey)

Comments: The lead district in this effort was Central Berkshire Regional School District, which has served as fiscal agent, and which contracted with the project coordinator, facilitators and trainers, and MCLA and BCC for use of facilities (June 26, 27, 28).

### **Subsequent participant districts:**

Farmington River Regional School District (comprising the Town of Otis)

North Adams Public Schools

Comments: Pittsfield Public Schools, Farmington River CSD and the North Adams Public Schools, although not original applicant districts, participated actively in the grant-sponsored activities, specifically, the training sessions held in June 2013, throughout the summer of 2013, and January 2014. No Berkshire County district failed to participate in some way. Participation by school districts outside Berkshire County was not solicited.

### **Other participating entities:**

Berkshire Community College

Berkshire County Superintendents Roundtable (Mass. Ass'n of School Superintendents)

Berkshire Readiness Center

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

## **SECTION 2: GOALS**

The Berkshire County Curriculum Frameworks Project identified eight (8) goals in its funding proposal:

1. Develop curriculum maps for English language arts, mathematics, and science/technology in grades K-12, a total of 39 maps;
2. Develop pacing guides for implementing the curriculum maps into daily lessons;
3. Create model curriculum units and formative assessments;
4. Establish an electronic repository for posting the curriculum maps, pacing guide, and videos, and for on-going online discussion and collaboration;
5. Create a 10-minute video in which teachers who have gone through the curriculum mapping process explain how the maps can be used, to be posted on the electronic repository;
6. Conduct an evaluation to ensure that the curriculum materials have been integrated into lesson plans that are being implemented;
7. Develop implementation plans with each district's central office staff as part of the closing training sessions; and
8. Create a network to support implementation with opportunities for virtual and face-to-face planning in the 2013-2014 school, year. This will follow the format of the professional learning communities that have already been established through the Berkshire Readiness Center.

## **SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The process for implementing the Berkshire County Curriculum Frameworks project was as follows.

1. Upon receipt of full approval of the grant proposal from the Commonwealth, and the execution of Project Agreement, Central Berkshire Regional School District, as the project's lead agency, ran an advertisement for a project coordinator, and shortly thereafter interviewed and appointed the successful applicant for the position. The key qualities that were sought (and found) in the project coordinator were: (a) availability and scheduling flexibility; (b) familiarity with the Common Core-based 2011 Massachusetts Frameworks

and progress toward the implementation by the Commonwealth of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College & Careers (PARCC) testing that is to replace the current MCAS test; (c) familiarity with Berkshire County's school districts and educational leaders; (d) ability to work as a member of a planning team; (e) organizational ability; (f) personal initiative in proceeding as needed to meet a tight timeline without close direction; (g) availability to keep the Berkshire County Superintendents Roundtable well informed about progress and problems with bringing the CIC grant-funded project to realization; and (h) familiarity with resources, both human and fiscal, including professional presenters and facilitators, that could be brought into the project in order to assure its success.

2. Project coordinator meets with participating school districts' superintendents one-to-one to determine what their expectations are for this project;
3. Project coordinator conduct a needs assessment survey of school administrators throughout Berkshire County to: (a) gauge interest in the project; (b) determine anticipated outcomes of the project from each district's perspective; (c) identify the level of progress toward realization of Common Core instruction; and (d) sound the extent of commitment of each district's educators' time to the project's completion.
4. Secure the services of grade-level and subject area consultants to assist participating teachers during the project. NOTE: This was accomplished in large part by the use of MCLA faculty members and consultants from Build Your Own Curriculum© and also from The Common Core Institute.
5. Develop plans for activities for teachers involved in the three days of late June activities.
6. Ensure arrangements are completed with the facility at which the late June sessions will take place.
7. Ensure that materials, equipment, and online access needed for the work to get accomplished in late June are available and ready. *NOTE: This was accomplished in cooperation with the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and Berkshire Community College.*
8. Curriculum Frameworks workshop takes place for three days in late June, with sessions running at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and Berkshire Community College, and three more days at various sites in Berkshire County, with work to be completed prior to the start of the 2013-2014 school year. NOTE: Stipends for teachers participating in these six days of concentrated curriculum mapping and instructional unit development were paid for in large part by a substantial grant from Race to the Top funds, in fact larger than the CIC grant award amount, available to the Berkshire Readiness Center, a Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education service housed at MCLA.
9. Teachers work product is edited and formatted for inclusion on a website that will be available to all participating districts who might be interested.
10. Create a 10-min. video, for inclusion on the project's website, in which teachers who have gone through the curriculum mapping process explain how the maps can be used. NOTE: This implementation step was revised after the work product had been submitted. Instead of teachers making a single video, three webinars were used – two developed by the assistant superintendent of Central Berkshire, who was a member of the planning group for the grant's activities, and one acquired with grant funds from the Common Core Institute,



dealing with the basics of curriculum mapping and instructional planning -- explaining the software, the mapping process, and how to proceed at the school level in completing the curriculum map for each grade and subject in developing appropriate instructional units based thereon.

11. Provide information to the entire faculties of the participating districts on effective use of the resources made available through the project. NOTE: The original idea for accomplishing this step was a county-wide professional development day to be held in the fall. That proved impractical. Superintendents and, through them, school principals throughout the county were assigned the task of informing their faculties and administrators of the resources available and how to access them.
12. Conduct an evaluation to ensure that the curriculum materials produced in July are being integrated into lesson plans that are actually informing instruction. NOTE: Due to the unavailability of the project coordinator since December for personal reasons, the conduct of the evaluation will be conducted through the Berkshire County Superintendents' Roundtable prior to the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

#### **SECTION 4: BUDGET**

The **original budget request** made of Administration & Finance for the 2013 CIC grant was:

<u>Function or Activity</u>	<u>Amt. Requested</u>
Project Mgr. [Coördinator]	\$ 25,000
Workshop Facilitators	\$ 20,000
Materials & Supplies	\$ 2,800
Video production & editing	\$ 3,500
Setup Web Presence	\$ 7,500
Participant Stipends	\$218,448
Travel	\$ 500
MCLA/Berk. Readiness Ctr. Admin. Support	<u>\$ 22,220</u>
TOTAL	\$299,968

The **actual budget approved** by Administration & Finance for the 2013 CIC grant was:

<u>Function or Activity</u>	<u>Amt. Requested</u>
Travel	\$ 500

Contracted Services	\$ 47,200
Supplies	\$ 15,300
Certified Salaries	<u>\$ 26,520</u>
TOTAL	\$ 89,520

Although it is not certain that the amount requested in the 2013 CIC grant proposal -- \$299,968 -- would have been approved by Administration & Finance in any event, the December 2012 cuts made by Governor Patrick in many state budget line items – so-called “9C” cuts – resulted in a substantial reduction of funds available to A & F for Community Innovation Challenge grants for FY 2014. The approval of CIC grant funding at 29.8% of the sum sought in the proposal was a consequence of the budget problems that faced the Commonwealth at the time the funds were to be awarded.

The Berkshire County Curriculum Frameworks project could not have proceeded solely with the sum being offered by A & F. This left three alternatives: (1) decline the grant, recognizing that the project could not be realized as described in the proposal; (2) proceed with the grant as seed money and seek funding for the remaining costs associated with the project from the member school districts; and (3) proceed with the grant as seed money and seek funding for the remaining costs from other sources.

Assuming the value of the project as envisioned was sufficient to eliminate alternative no. 1, at least for the time being, this left two alternatives. Alternative no. 2 would have required participating districts to budget in excess of \$130,000 among them for what had not been deemed feasible as a collaborative effort without most of the original proposed budget. The superintendents, 62.5% of whom oversee management of regional school districts, would then have faced two daunting tasks to be accomplished on very short notice. First, as a group they would have to have come up with a formula agreeable to each of their respective school committees for apportioning the remaining needed funds for the proposed 2014 CIC grant-funded project. This was attempted preliminarily and was abandoned. For, and second, they would immediately have had to seek from their respective school committees, at the eleventh hour of their FY 2014 budget process, the additional money needed to proceed. This would have led to the project’s disintegration. It was simply a more tortuous version of Alternative no. 1.

Alternative no. 3 presented itself as a sort of *deus ex machina*. The involvement from the project’s inception of MCLA in developing the proposal resulted in the College’s working with the Berkshire Readiness Center, which is housed on its North Adams campus, to provide funds available to the Readiness Center from the federal Race to the Top grant that Massachusetts received in FY 2010 for use in FYs 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. Key to the success of this effort to find additional funding through MCLA and the Readiness Center were MCLA President Mary Grant, MCLA Academic Vice-President Cynthia Brown, and MCLA Dean of Graduate & Continuing Education of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Howard J. Eberwein III. In the end MCLA and the Readiness Center contributed \$99,000 to this project. This meant that 62.8% of the funds originally sought through the 2013 CIC grant were available for the Berkshire County Curriculum Frameworks Project.

Although this was far from as much as the grant planners had originally proposed, it was enough to get the activities planned for summer 2013 and into the fall of 2013 underway and completed, albeit on a somewhat reduced scale. The major expenditure area that the grant as approved by A & F did

not fund was stipends for participating educators. The sum provided by the Readiness Center enabled those stipends, which were owed to participants at a flat rate of \$30.00/hr., with local rates adjusted upwards with a small contribution of local funds to meet whatever local collective bargaining agreements might have required.

As a consequence, \$20,000 was shifted early in the process from the CIC budget line “Certified Salaries” to “Contracted Services.” The final sum expended from the 2013 CIC grant was \$70,334.50.

## **SECTION 5: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

### **Challenges**

The main challenges that the planners of the Berkshire County Curriculum Framework Project faced were:

1. Revising the timeframe for the activities to take place during the summer of 2013;
2. Identifying the locations for the training;
3. Ascertaining common needs of the participating districts, who were at various stages of planning for the introduction of a Common Core-based curriculum;
4. Determining the software format in which the work done by educators from participating districts would be done;
5. Sustaining the participant districts’ commitment to the project during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Solutions**

The solutions that were found to these challenges, to the extent that they were solved, are as follows, in the order that the challenges are stated above.

#### **1. Timeframe.**

After meetings among the members of the original planning group (the coordinator, the Dean of Graduate & Continuing Education at MCLA, and Central Berkshire Regional School District’s superintendent and assistant superintendent) to review surveys of educators’ availability, it was determined that a late July program, which had originally been the objective, was too late in the summer, too likely to conflict with some participating educators’ vacation plans, and too near to the start of the next school year, was unsatisfactory. The new plan established a two-part commitment of time from participants: three days at the end of June, right after the 2012-2013 school year ended; and three more days at times to be determined by the members of grade and subject working groups, with all work completed prior to the start of the 2013-2014 school year. This is in fact what took place, and no working group failed to deliver its work product as required.

#### **2. Locations.**

It was anticipated that at least 100 educators from the participating districts would participate in this project. This required that sufficient space for both plenary session and smaller working

group sessions be available. MCLA had previously volunteered the use of space at the College for all three days. But a conflict arose for MCLA on one of the days, so that the project's third day meeting had to be moved. It was fortunate that Berkshire Community College, in Pittsfield, was open and had space available that could accommodate our project's working sessions.

### 3. Ascertaining common needs.

This turned out to be a major challenge, matched only by no. 5, below. Throughout discussions with the membership of the Berkshire County Superintendents Roundtable at the inception of the application process, and throughout the process of developing the application, it appeared that all eight original participant districts were at about the same place in developing and mapping a Common Core-based curriculum and developing instructional units for the subjects to be tested by PARCC: all were in the early stages of the process. But when the project coordinator surveyed the districts in Berkshire County for more specific information he learned that in fact there was not a consensus among superintendents or curriculum directors on what actually was needed in their individual cases. Some had no mapping template software and had done no work to speak of on curriculum development; indeed, some districts' personnel were not well informed about the Common Core despite its having been adopted as the 2011 Massachusetts Frameworks two years earlier; some districts had curriculum mapping software already and were at some stage besides the very outset of the project; and some, admittedly a small number, professed to being well along with to having already completed the project.

The question then became: given all this information what could we do that would be of use to the greatest number of Berkshire County districts? What was decided upon by the planning committee, and then reviewed at length with the Roundtable members, was to use the CIC grant to provide:

(a) a common understanding of the Common Core, in particular how it varies from the pre-2011 Frameworks and therefore what makes it new and challenging, and of the new assessment system to be introduced into Massachusetts (Partnership for assessment of readiness for College and Careers – PARCC);

(b) an overview of curriculum mapping as an enterprise;

(c) training in the use of and access to a common software template for curriculum mapping that all districts could use in order to share work product with one another;

(d) a presentation of the problem of dividing a Common Core-based curriculum in each subject to be tested by PARCC over a 180-day school year;

(e) a review of various online tools and resources that could be used in curriculum mapping;

(f) an overview of the process for constructing lesson and unit plans that incorporate interim assessments as well as focused and logically sequential; learning activities; and

(g) a subject-specific, 2011 Massachusetts Frameworks-based project, to be completed over the three remaining days of the project. Some elements of this program were applicable to each participating district's educators.

### 4. Software format.

As noted in no. 3, above, there was not a common software template in use in Berkshire County

for use in developing curriculum maps. After a good deal of searching for a flexible, readily modified, and easily taught software package that all participants could use, it was decided that two-year licenses for Build Your Own Curriculum© (BYOC) would be acquired with CIC money for use by all participating districts.

There was some discussion at the outset of using EDWIN, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education's data warehouse and analytical tool, for this purpose. It was decided by the planning group that EDWIN was not suitable for this purpose. EDWIN has many uses and holds out considerable promise in the years ago. It is nevertheless widely viewed as a complicated and therefore difficult program to learn, let alone master. It was determined that time was of the essence with the CIC grant project, and that far too much of what time there was would be taken up with learning the rudiments of EDWIN rather than acquiring the knowledge of the Common Core, PARCC, and BYOC so that actual mapping and curriculum development work could proceed.

#### 5. Sustaining commitment.

*This challenge has proven the most difficult to address.* Once the focus of the summer project had given way to the start of a new school year in September the impetus that had developed in many districts, driven by the educators who had participated in the CIC summer sessions, began to dissipate. Consultation with the members of the Superintendents Roundtable led to a conclusion that is easy to state and difficult to implement: if the effort were to be sustained into the school year, and work were to continue to get done without funding being available from either the CIC grant or, even more amply, from the Berkshire Readiness Center, housed at MCLA, which contributed a sum larger than the CIC grant to cover many of the stipend costs for participants, then building principals, only a few of whom had been summer project participants, would have to be involved much more directly.

Toward this end the CIC grant funded acquisition or development of three webinars for use in particular by county principals, in fact by anyone who chose to view them, on how the mapping project could proceed at the individual school and district level. The webinars were produced by Dr. Robert Putnam, Central Berkshire's assistant superintendent and a main presenter during the three days of the initial meetings and the organizer of the two days in January 2014 at the project's conclusion. Despite the development of these webinars, which could be accessed through the website set up for the [CIC project](#), county principals displayed little interest in becoming familiar with the tools that had been developed.

It appears that the reason for this lack of interest among building-level administrators is that participating districts' superintendents did not involve them to a sufficient extent at the inception of the project. In all likelihood this made the curriculum development enterprise seem to principals to be "yet one more thing" for them to deal with coming from above. By itself the C.I.C.-funded county-wide effort might not have been seen in this light. But with the flood of time-consuming and complex initiatives coming from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education since 2011-2012, primarily in response to the federal Race to the Top initiatives, the C.I.C.-funded effort, however much it was intended actually to help small, rural districts solve a problem arising from an RTTT-driven measure, plainly was perceived as something else coming from outside, requiring dedication of considerable administrative time and effort, without immediate practical benefits being apparent..

In light of this disappointing response a final, two-day effort was made in January 2014 to reinvigorate the interest shown among district's when the grant proposal was developed, and that was in evidence during the summer curriculum mapping and instructional unit development activities. Those who attended the summer activities, as well as principals and other interested parties, were invited back for two days – one day devoted to the 2011 Massachusetts Frameworks K-5, the other to those Frameworks 6-12. Attendance at these two days was respectable. It remains to be seen whether, as result of the follow-up efforts made in January, and with continued publicity to districts about the curriculum mapping that was begin in late June 2013, this project will proceed in any meaningful or coherent fashion.

## **SECTION 6: OUTCOMES**

As set out in the Agreement between the eight original Berkshire County participating school districts and the Office of Administration and Finance, there were two principal outcomes being sought through the award of this grant:

### **Outcome 1**

The collaborative efforts of up to 99 teachers and several consultants, as well as the project facilitator [late called “coördinator”], will result in a substantial online cache of resources for participating districts’ teachers in English language arts, mathematics, and science to provide effective instruction across all grades (K-12) through implementing the new Massachusetts frameworks (the “Common Core”); and

### **Outcome 2**





Teachers in core subjects – English language arts, mathematics, science – are making regular and effective use during the 2013-2014 school year of the resources that have been provided through the activities sponsored by the CIC [Berkshire County Curriculum Frameworks Project] grant, with the measure of success determined by a formal evaluation [using] instructional supervisors’ observation of classroom activities and teacher lesson plans.

With regard to Outcome 1, the materials found elsewhere in this Final Report show that the outcome sought initially has been achieved. Although no comprehensive K-12 English language arts-mathematics-science curriculum map was developed through this project, substantial work was accomplished in this regard, and resources are available to teachers, whether in Berkshire County or elsewhere, to use in aligning instruction with the 2011 Massachusetts Frameworks and the Common Core expectations to be measured by PARCC. Anyone seeking to test this claim’s veracity should visit the program’s [webpage](#), or examine the materials attached to this Final Report, to see for her-/himself what the efforts funded by the 2013 CIC grant, as well as by a substantial sum in Berkshire Readiness Center race to the Top money, have achieved.

With regard to Outcome 2, a similar claim of success cannot be made. As was noted in Section 5, the formal surveying of participating districts that was to have taken place was made impossible, at least within the framework of completion of the grant and filing of this Final report, by the incapacitation of the project coordinator in the winter. Nevertheless, the response to the work product developed, as shown through website inquiries and informal surveying of the members of the Superintendents’ Roundtable about use in their schools of the work product developed in summer 2013 through the support of the CIC grant and Berkshire Readiness Center Race to the Top funds, has been tepid.

This leads to *four conclusions* for anyone seeking to replicate this county-wide curriculum development project.

1. Greater lead time is required. Greater lead time in organizing not only the material support for this sort of project, but also for tailoring the projects specific efforts to the needs of each school district individually, than the schedule for the 2013 CIC grant's implementation allowed. This is by no means intended as a criticism of the CIC grant process or completion schedule. It is simply a recognition that a period from late February through early June – perhaps 60 working days -- is insufficient, given the competing demands on principals' and teachers' time, especially with the MCAS test administration schedule, to ensure that the sharpest, most useful focus for eight disparate school districts benefit equally from the project is required.
2. Sustained effort at informing districts after the end of the project is needed. Not only must a sustained effort be made from the outset to generate interest and support at the building level for a project of this sort, but a greater emphasis needs to be made after the fact – after the initial work is completed -- on making educators, especially principals, aware that there is work product available, i.e., that educational resources have been produced by local colleagues, that their work product is flexibility and can be accommodated to other schools' or classrooms' particular needs or emphases, and that the curriculum mapping tool available for use in making more progress possible at the school and classroom level, is required.
3. Building-level leadership accountability is needed for sustainability of the effort. The lack of widespread use by building and classroom educators of the county-wide project's curriculum development efforts that the anecdotal evidence provides should alert district administrative leadership, starting with school superintendents, that something more than simple encouragement is needed to make such efforts wholly worthwhile. District administrative leadership must make participation in developing and then use of the project's work product a key issue in assessing the effectiveness of building-level leadership. If building principals and district curriculum personnel are not held accountable for the faculty members' participation in developing and then using the work done by such products, it is highly unlikely that a project of this sort will meet satisfy Outcome 2.
4. Sustainable fiscal resources for inter-district collaboration required. Fiscal resources other than CIC grant funds – and, as here, expiring race to the Top funds provided through the regional Readiness Center – are needed to make curriculum development activities on this scale, with this level of sophistication, part of the professional culture of the district. This most likely means each district providing funds for summer work – and, if collaboration on this scale is to be sustained, then pooling those resources in some manner to bring the most committed teachers together from as many districts as possible. The 180-day school year is too full for teachers as it is. Work planned for after school periods or vacation periods during the school year will have only modest success. Summer is the time for proceeding with an effort such as this, and in this regard the Berkshire County Curriculum Frameworks Project grant was spot on. The lack of sufficient funding to continue the effort in the summer of 2014 except on a small and ad hoc scale shows that such planning, however difficult in an unstable school budgeting climate, should be part of the grant application process.
- 5.

PROJECT GOAL	MEASURE	CURRENT PERIOD	PRIOR PERIOD	TREND	TARGET	STATUS	COMMENTS
To develop a regional curriculum framework program	# of teachers participating in the program						
	# of online resources made available through the program						
	# of students using the resources during the school year						
STATUS LEGEND	OFF TARGET:		CLOSE TO TARGET		ON TARGET:		NOT APPLICABLE: 

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For additional information about the Berkshire County Curriculum Frameworks Project contact:

Through June 30, 2014:

William J. Cameron  
 Superintendent  
 Central Berkshire Regional School District  
 254 Hinsdale Road  
 Dalton, MA 01226  
 E-mail: [wcameron@cbrsd.org](mailto:wcameron@cbrsd.org)  
 Phone: (413) 684-0320

On July 1, 2014 and thereafter.:

Robert Putnam  
 Assistant Superintendent (through 6/30/14)  
 Superintendent (effective 7/1/14)  
 Central Berkshire Regional School District  
 254 Hinsdale Road  
 Dalton, MA 01226  
 E-mail: [rputnam@cbrsd.org](mailto:rputnam@cbrsd.org)  
 Phone: (413) 684-0320



